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UNCLAS WELLINGTON 000764

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR D (FRITZ), EAP/ANP, EAP/EP, EAP/RSP, INR/EAP
NSC FOR VICTOR CHA AND MICHAEL GREEN
SECDEF FOR OSD/ISA LIZ PHU
PACOM FOR J2/J233/J5/SJFHQ

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL NZ

SUBJECT: NZ ELECTIONS: LABOUR VICTORY CONFIRMED

REF: WELLINGTON 719

¶11. (U) New Zealand's official election results, released October 1, confirm a Labour victory with 50 seats in Parliament and a slightly easier challenge in forming the next government. The notable change from preliminary counts on election night September 17 is the reduction of the overall size of Parliament by one seat to 121 at the expense of the National Party, which now holds 48 seats instead of the 49 indicated earlier. The revision also reduces from 12 to 11 the number of supportive minority-party seats that Labour needs to secure.

¶12. (SBU) Labour is already assured a coalition partnership with Jim Anderton's Progressive Party, which holds one seat. A Labour-Progressive coalition will need help from at least two other parties to reach the 61 seats necessary to manage a government. Its options are: New Zealand First (seven seats), the Green Party (six seats), United Future (three seats), and the Maori Party (four seats). Labour's task of forming a government proves more challenging than in the 1999 and 2002 elections because it faces a reinvigorated National Party. A sustainable government will require the participation of at least four parties, whereas the prior Labour-led governments required no more than three. As the center-left narrowly outpolled the center-right (by less than one point), Labour faces pressure to lean to center as it formulates its strategy for forming a government.

¶13. (U) In the tally of 218,000 absentee and overseas party votes, the Maori Party posted a stronger than expected performance. While the final count leaves the party's seat count unchanged, the party is likely to bear influence disproportionately in excess of its four seats.

Burnett